

Achievements: U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation, and Research (FOBESII) March 2017

Launched in 2014 as part of the U.S.-Mexico High-Level Economic Dialogue, FOBESII has expanded educational exchanges, joint research, and innovation for the mutual economic benefit of the United States and Mexico.

□ **Increased Academic Exchanges:** According to the annual *Open Doors* report, the number of U.S. students in Mexico has increased 26%, from 3,730 in 2012-13 to 4,712 in 2014-15, and the number of Mexican students studying in the United States has increased 18%, from 14,199 in 2012-13 to 16,733 in 2015-16.

□ **Strengthened Workforce Development and Bilateral Education Cooperation through 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund Grants:** The goal of 100,000 Strong in the Americas—the U.S. leading education initiative in the Western Hemisphere—is to increase the annual number of U.S. students studying in the region, and bring 100,000 students to the United States by 2020. The central mechanism to support this initiative is the Innovation Fund, the dynamic public-private sector collaboration among the U.S. government, Partners of the Americas, NAESA: Association of International Educators, corporations, and foundations. Innovation Fund grants fuel strategic partnerships among universities and community colleges to create new innovative student exchange and training programs that increase student mobility, enhance bilateral education cooperation, and stimulate economic competitiveness. Since the inception of the Innovation Fund in January 2014, 93 Innovation Fund grants have been awarded to winning teams of higher education institutions throughout the Americas, with Mexico as the leading country. Mexican and U.S. universities account for 35% of total Innovation Fund grants awarded to date.

□ **Strengthened Workforce Development through Proyecta 100,000:** Since 2014, more than 101,000 Mexicans have participated in undergraduate and graduate programs in the United States through Proyecta 100,000. Funded by the Mexican Government in collaboration with the private and academic sectors, Proyecta 100,000 increases bilateral academic and student mobility through different grants for students from indigenous groups and other marginalized communities, English immersion courses, teacher professional development courses, summer engineering programs, a semester abroad for law students, GRE preparation courses, and science clubs.

□ **Expanded Fulbright-García Robles Exchanges:** Our binational Fulbright-García Robles program (administered by the U.S.-Mexico Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange, COMEXUS) is one of the largest Fulbright programs in the world. Generous funding from the Mexican Ministry of Public Education (SEP) increased from 12 to 60 the number of U.S.-grantee English Teaching Assistants who contribute their knowledge to Mexican classrooms while strengthening their own teaching and intercultural skills. Moreover, fourteen U.S. grantees are participating in the Fulbright-García Robles Binational Business Program that increases managerial talent on both sides of the border, up from eight in 2013.

In Fall 2016, 75 new Mexican grantees started their programs in the United States. Mexico, for its part, received 113 new U.S. grantees and will continue supporting others in their second year. Thanks to an additional contribution from SEP in 2014, COMEXUS has been able to finance 1,220 Mexican scholarship recipients under Proyecta 100,000 Program. Also, SEP, with logistical support from COMEXUS, has sent 500 English language

teachers to summer professionalization courses in different Higher Education Institutions in the United States between 2015 and 2016.

□ **Expanded access to educational exchanges and internships:**

- Since FOBESII's launch in 2014, 57 U.S. citizen undergraduate students of limited financial means have pursued academic studies or internships in Mexico through the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, developing their professional and Spanish-language skills.
- Generous funding from SEP, Santander Universidades-Universia, and the Televisa Foundation has enabled close to 780 Mexican students from bilingual, international, and sustainable technological universities (BIS) to spend fall semesters at community colleges in the United States. This program and other short-term research and leadership training programs at U.S. universities not only improve the English-language and technical skills of the participants—many of whom are women from indigenous groups and marginalized communities—but also serve as powerful recruitment tools for participating U.S. universities.
- According to the State Department, 160 Mexicans participated in professional internship programs in 2016 under the FOBESII-inspired Memorandum of Understanding signed in March 2015. Currently 15 Mexican interns are lending their talents to Silicon Valley companies.

□ **Capitalizing on Mexico's Energy Reform:** After more than 70 years of Pemex's exclusive participation, the Mexican 2013 energy reform opened the entire value chain of the hydrocarbons industry to private investment. This opened up the energy and power sectors, creating new opportunities for U.S. companies to expand operations and increase sales of their products and services in Mexico. Through FOBESII, U.S. and Mexican companies in the energy and power sectors and higher education institutions are working to expand and improve English language education and technical skills to answer a forecasted rising demand for bilingual qualified workers in these sectors.

□ **Accelerated Joint Research and Innovation: The National Science Foundation (NSF) and Mexico's National Science and Technology Council (CONACYT)** are fostering high-quality and industry-relevant collaboration among universities, research centers, and industry of both countries. Through the NSF Partnerships for International Research and Education (PIRE) program, U.S. and Mexican researchers are developing a transparent cranial implant—called "Windows to the Brain"—to replace portions of the skull. This implant would allow for non-invasive neuro procedures, improving our ability to diagnose and treat disorders such as traumatic brain injury and stroke.

Mexico is also a partner in NSF's Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide (GROW) program, which allows young, promising U.S. students to collaborate with researchers in Mexico, through short stays in Mexican institutions that develop scientific and technological research. NSF supports its Industry/University Collaborative Research Centers (I/UCRC) in working together with counterpart centers in Mexico. CONACYT similarly offers opportunities for Mexican research centers to organize themselves and include industry representatives with common research interests. These partnerships aim to enable sustained industry and academia partnerships to perform cutting-edge pre-competitive research in science, engineering, and technology fields of interest to industry that can drive innovation and benefit both economies.

In 2015 and 2016, CONACYT worked with NSF's Innovation Corps (I-Corps) program with 60 Mexican scientists, PhD students, and engineers to expand their focus and work beyond the laboratory into entrepreneurial and business ventures. CONACYT subsequently launched a similar program with Mexican government funding

to continue to build a culture of innovation in the Mexican science community. Together, NSF and CONACYT are also strengthening cooperation between CONACYT-supported centers and NSF's Engineering Research Centers (ERC) program.

- **The CaliBaja Center for Resilient Materials & Systems** brings together multidisciplinary teams of researchers and scholars from the University of California in San Diego (UCSD). The Baja California Center for Nanoscience and Nanotechnology of the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the Center for Scientific Research and Higher Education of Ensenada design materials and systems for extreme environments, with emphasis in aerospace, biomedical devices, and manufacturing. Sixteen Mexican researchers affiliated with UCSD collaborate in the Cali-Baja Center, including Nobel Prize laureate in Chemistry, Dr. Mario Molina.

- **The Mission Foods Texas-Mexico Center** at Southern Methodist University was inaugurated in April 2016 to encourage greater cross-border integration and cross-sector collaboration in academia, government, NGOs, and business. Its research leads to actionable ideas and policy recommendations that address current issues in bilateral trade and economics, energy, migration, border issues, education, human capital, and development. This center was made possible by \$4 million from GRUMA-Mission Foods, a Mexican corporation based in Dallas.

In addition to the above programs, FOBESII drives economic competitiveness in both nations through closer U.S.-Mexico cooperation in education and research, including:

- **The conclusion of more than 115 new cooperative agreements between U.S. and Mexican universities** thanks to the visits and delegations of scores of Governors, Mayors, and University Presidents to Mexico (<https://goo.gl/ValvIT>).

- **The establishment of new U.S. university offices and campuses in Mexico** to attract Mexican students to the U.S. university market, increase U.S. student international business savvy, and encourage cross-border research.

- **Expanded Student Recruitment:** In 2015-16, EducationUSA and COMEXUS organized four multi-city tours that enabled representatives of more than 70 different U.S. institutions of higher education to reach over 15,000 potential Mexican applicants to their universities. Thanks to the innovative work of U.S. universities and Mexican Consulates, Mexican university student fairs took place in 2015 and 2016 in El Paso, Austin, Northern California, and Minneapolis. Santander Universidades, Universia, ANUIES, the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City have sent over 300 Mexican university rectors to the U.S. over the past two years to engage with American counterparts.